Universal Religion.

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GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE MORAL LIFE.

By William D. LeSueur.

If, looking back through history, we inquire what general relation the God-consciousness has borne to human life, we shall find that it has always in one way or another connected itself with conduct. In different countries, and in different ages in the same country, there have been widely differing moral standards; but the God-consciousness has at last created the sense of authority in connection with human actions by separating them into the contrasted categories of things permitted, or even enjoined, and things forbidden. We see also a secular movement towards harmonizing the theological categories, if we may so call them, with the moral categories of right and wrong, each with each, as we say in geometrical demonstrations. In fact it may be said that, from the earliest period, theology and morality, in spite of many divergences and even conflicts, have been more or less conscious of a common mission. "Such terrible things," the Roman poet says, "could religion persuade men to!" True, but the terrible things were themselves sacrifices to an overshadowing sense of

authority, the general effect of which was to strengthen character and add depth and seriousness to human life.

Among the more enlightened heathen the sense of agreement, we may say, of identity between the dictates of religion and those of natural morality was complete. It is impossible to read the works of the Greek dramatists, of Plato, of Cicero, of Virgil, of Seneca, of the Stoics generally without feeling this. Every one remembers the noble passage quoted by Matthew Arnold from Sophocles in the conclusion of his essay on "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment." But more familiar examples of a similar identification are furnished to us in Jewish literature. The Bible may be regarded as a continuous study in God-consciousness. No portion of it is more instructive in this sense than the Book of Psalms. Here while we have no trace of anything that can be called dogmatic theology, we have the most ardent aspirations after righteousness, after a conformity of heart and life to the will of a Perfect Being. Take, almost at random, such passages as the following:

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth."

"Great peace have they which love thy law."

"Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me."

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In the minds of the writers there was plainly the closest identity between the thought of God and the thought of righteousness. The men who held this belief had, strictly speaking, no other theology. Back of them they had a legendary national history rich in myth and miracle. In this respect the Jews did not differ from other nations; but to say that it was their belief in a past supernaturalism which gave to their faith in God as a perfectly holy Being the force and intensity to which the Psalms bear witness would not be reasonable. These men

did not see any miracles taking place in their own day. They saw, as we do, an orderly course of nature. The fiercity of natural laws seems to be hinted at in words which we find in the 119th psalm: "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth and it abideth. They continue to this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants." Without theology therefore, without any doctrine of the Trinity, without any system of future rewards and punishments, without any doctrine even of a future life, without an infallible Bible, without sacraments, and with no scheme of salvation save right living, these men apprehended God and made Him the stay of their every day life.

We have said that the whole Bible is a study in God-consciousness. We may add that it points continually to the identity of His will with the moral law. Moses in his final address to the people of Israel, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, places before them the issue of life or death as hanging on their obedience or disobedience to the Divine law. Such words as these are very expressive: "For he is thy life and the length of thy days." "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." Should they prove disobedient, confusion and trouble will arise among them; and then they will be found asking: "Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?"

The point I am anxious to bring home is that there can be —because there **has been**—a God-consciousness without any formal theology, and that this God-consciousness has been related in the most intimate manner with purity and uprightness of life. Many, it is to be feared, today are taking advantage of the discredit into which supernaturalism has fallen, to proclaim the nullity of the religious view of life, and their own emancipation from all moral authority, save such as may inhere in the conventions of society; while these, as being mere conventions, they hold themselves at liberty to evade whenever it can be done with safety and advantage. Let us ask ourselves seriously, looking abroad upon society, whether this is not the case. What is the prevailing worship of success, above all in the grossly material form of money, but a denial not only of God, but of the higher life of the soul. "Prove to me that I

have a soul," one may say, "before you talk to me of its higher life." "I cannot **prove** to you that you have appetites even," I should reply: "It is for you to say whether you have them or not; appetite is just as much a matter of consciousness as soul. It is for you to say whether you have a soul or not. It is for you to say what you recognize your essential self to be. You admit probably that you have appetites; you feel them. Is that all you are conscious of? Have you no affections? If not, you are not a normal human being. Assuming that there is some one whom you love—wife, daughter, or sister—what is the best you can wish for the one you love best? You want her to have money—of course; we must start with that. But surely that is not enough. She might have money and not be much better or happier than some other people you know who have money. Would you be satisfied with that? Hardly. You want her in the first place to have a capacity to return your love. You would not like to see her an utterly selfish being. You would not like her to be mean, crafty, untruthful, envious, hard-hearted. You would not like her to be dull, stupid, absolutely without appreciation of literature and art. In a word you would not like her to be an earthward-stooping creature, interested in nothing but the money with which you had endowed her. What does all this mean save that you would wish the person you love to have a soul—to have a higher nature and to be conscious of it. And yet you doubt whether you have a soul yourself! Believe me, friend, you may have created your soul very roughly in the scramble for wealth; but if you are still able to love disinterestedly one human being, your soul is still alive; and, as you see, it would fain build itself up anew in the object of your love. All the soul you would give to that object is just the soul you should have had yourself."

It must be conceded that it is impossible to **prove** to any man that he has a soul, or that there is anything worth his while beyond the gratification of his senses; at least I would not undertake the task, save to the extent and on the lines just indicated. Yet the history of the world surely gives us hints that the soul counts for something—that "the crop-full bird" and "the maw-crammed beast" are not types of the perfect

man. "You know," says Horace, writing to his friend Lollins after a reperusal of Homer, "you know all about the voices of the Sirens and those drugged chalices of Circe's, which, had Ulysses stupidly and greedily joined his companions in drinking, he would have become a base and soulless slave to a lustful mistress, and lived the life of a filthy hound or a wallowing swine." Alas, this is only a myth; but there was meaning in it to the Epicurean Horace; is there none in it to the present age?

Let me briefly draw my conclusion. There is today, I believe, a religion for the people in the simple doctrine of the human soul, of its needs, of its demands, of its affinity for truth, of its inevitable recognition of the moral law, of its everlasting yea to the question: Is there a higher interpretation of the universe than that taught in the technical schools and in the market place? Who can stir the human soul so as to make it increasingly conscious of it itself? That man is the preacher for the people. That man may fill the world with a new yet old religion—new in that it will be free as none ever was before from all logical entanglements and all trammels of the temporary and the finite; old in that it is the same intuition which long ages ago found lodgment in the heart of man. The awakened soul will see law in the universe just as our natural eyes see the light; and, as God once pronounced the light good, so will man affirm that the law is good—nay, more, that it is God.

CARDINAL BELIEFS OF THE SOCIETIES FOR UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

Alfred W. Martin.

1. We believe in freedom of thought because only thereby can truth be progressively discovered and because we wish to be free to accept it when found. Hence we refrain from setting up any doctrinal statement or theological creed such as the Christian churches have adopted and to which members are committed when they join.

2. We believe that neither Bible, nor Pope, nor Council, nor personal intuition can **settle** any disputed questions in morals or religion; that the only promising way to settle disputed questions is to apply to them the method of freedom, the method of science, the method by which every single conclusion that today is accepted as truth has been reached; the method which accords perfect freedom to each individual thinker and allows nothing but evidence to determine whether or not the individual's conclusion shall rank as a universally accepted truth.

3. We believe, moreover, that this method is just as applicable to spiritual facts as to material facts and that thinking people will eventually agree on the great, vital, open questions of morals and religion, just as by the application of this method of freedom they have come to agree on gravitation, evolution, and other truths which the method of science has established.

4. We believe there is no danger of reaching absolute uniformity of belief because truth is infinite. There will always be some "open" questions for finite minds in an infinite universe, however many they agree upon.

5. We believe that since new light may at any time be thrown on old facts, or new facts be discovered, no conclusions should be held as **absolutely** final, but rather as subject to possible modification in the light of later research.

6. We believe that all individuals who have verified for themselves certain beliefs, by intuition or otherwise, should submit them for universal verification before daring to claim that they are part of the world's stock of established truths.

7. We believe that the highest interests of moral and religious progress are served by maintaining the mental attitude indicated in the preceding paragraphs. Consequently the minister is hired simply to express freely the results of his study on moral and religious questions, the members of the society being equally free to accept or reject his results, he incurring no danger of being discharged because of differences in belief between them and him.

8. We believe that the needs of the heart in hours of adversity or bereavement are satisfactorily met only when in harmony with the need of the head for truth. Consolations grounded on superstitious beliefs or on untenable dogmas cannot console when put to the test of value. "The spirit of truth is the comforter who guides into all truth."

9. We believe that religion is a fact of universal human nature, the fact of aspiration and upward endeavor; that the interpretation of this fact and all it implies belongs to science, the universal interpreter of all facts and in that interpreter we believe with an enthusiastic faith; for, let it prove what it may, it cannot prove a lie.

10. We believe that religion is more than all historic religions, that while some religions have died and others are dying, religion itself can never die. At bottom religion is man's thought of his relation to the universe: and since he must always have some thought on that subject and the thought generate emotions and lead to actions, it follows that religion can never die.

11. We believe that the old theology of Christendom with its three historic roots of infallible authority (Biblical Papal, intuitional) and its countless branches of creeds and dogmas is disappearing fast and that a new theology created and guaranteed by science, the universal interpreter of all facts spiritual and material, is steadily taking the place of the old.

12. We believe each of the seven great religions of today, whatever its limitation, has its permanent message and inspiration; therefore we reach out to them all, gratefully incorporating their helpful contributions into the religion which includes them all while identical with no one of them.

13. We believe that while each of the world's great re-

ligious teachers taught much that had but temporary and local value, yet elements of permanent and universal worth are found in the gospel of each. Therefore we seek to conserve and use these sources of inspiration in the conduct of life, paying due homage to each of these teachers (and not to Jesus alone) according to the amount of truth found in his message and his degree of approximation to the absolute ideal.

14. We believe that Unitarianism, from which our movement evolved, stands for less than Universal Religion, because it is still a sect of Christianity and retains the Christian name and by collective voice in national assembly unanimously voted to "accept the religion of Jesus." In contrast to all this we hold "Human" to be a broader term than "Christian" and "Universal" than "Unitarian;" hence we voted to stand not for the religion of Jesus alone, but for the religion of universal Man, the religion which accords full justice to Jesus and to every other teacher, paying due homage to each according to the truth he taught and the inspiration afforded by his character and work.

15. We believe that Unitarianism will eventually surrender the limiting phrases of its national constitution, thereby completing the evolution of its freedom, perfecting the terms of its fellowship and precluding the possibility of such sorrowful secessions as the names of Parker, Frothingham, Potter. Abbot, Jones, and others recall.

16. We believe that the organization of sects and the prevalence of the sectarian spirit are inimical to the cause of religious truth and progress, tending to make men more concerned for sectarian victory than for the triumph of truth; therefore we are organized as a non-sectarian society, a fellowship of free souls, with open doors of perpetual welcome for all who are moved by aspiration toward larger truth and purer life.

17. We believe that when the seven great religions abandon their conflicting claims and each acknowledges that its Bible is only a part and not the whole of divine revelation, that its founder is not the only light of the world, but rather one of a number of great luminaries, that its church or fellowship is a part and not the whole of the true church, then and not till

then will sectarianism have disappeared and our humble experiment of non-sectarian societies be completely justified. For, whenever a church or religious society subordinates itself to the Universal Church of mankind as its higher whole and lives both for itself and for that higher whole, there a truly non-sectarian society exists, a society for Universal Religion.

18. We believe that just as the first two American colonies expressed in concrete reality the political union proposed in the constitution of the United States, so the two societies for Universal Religion, one at Tacoma and the other at Seattle, express in concrete reality a corresponding religious union—a union of free churches of free individuals,—a "Universal Church of Mankind." Such a church no more exists now than did the United States prior to 1787, yet as those two first colonies were organized with reference to a political union that did not then exist, so these two churches are organized with reference to a religious union that exists only as an ideal in the minds of the members, but which they believe must eventually be realized as surely as was the union of the independent states.

19. We believe that **appreciation** is the noblest word in the vocabulary of the soul, implying more than forbearance, more than tolerance more than charity; crowning justice with love in its receptive, sympathetic, unpatronizing attitude to all religions, all Bibles, all teachers, all movements, modern and ancient, occult and open, metaphysical and ethical; committed to no one of them while seeking help and inspiration from all.

20. We believe that while we have much in common with the Christian churches, the difference in the ideal we hold justifies and demands our separate organization—the ideal not of Christian unity but of human unity; a union of uncreeded, independent societies of free men and women pledged to freedom, to her method of truth-seeking and to the cause of univrsal justice and love.

THE NEW AGE.

By D. J. H. Ward.

A new age dawns, a time of greater trust;
Not always shall Tradition say, "Thou must."
'Twas mostly said by them of olden time:
"Believe! Have faith! Your reason may not climb
To things Divine, or know how souls to save;
Only to seers, such truths the great God gave."
To all of which, the age that is replies:
"There are more things within these deep blue skies
Than seers and sages who taught you could know;
And many things which these thought so and so,
In clearer light have proven thus and thus;
Hence truth for them, not always is for us."
Then, Noble Past! thou'lt not misunderstand,
With all true souls, we join fraternal hand.
To Thee anew, our gratitude we seal;
But Future Times shall have our strength and zeal.
The Truth we love, Credulity we fear;
Hence all things test, hold only while they're clear.

EDITORIAL.

IS THE WORLD GROWING BETTER?

Under nine headings the editor of a new cyclopaedia sums up the most significant signs of social progress, proving that there can be but one answer to the sceptic's question concerning the world's betterment:

Arbitration is steadily gaining. **Education.** In the U. S. of children between 5 and 18, there were in public schools in 1870, 57 per cent.; in 1902, 71 per cent. **Labor.** Work is abundant, wages rising, the eight-hour day gaining. In the U. S. trades unions have doubled membership since the era of the trusts. **Wealth** is accumulating, yet rich men give as never before. Public benefactions in the U. S. the last three years have averaged $97,000,000 per year. Hundreds of employers are introducing industrial betterment. **Institutions.** Libraries, hospitals, parks, playgrounds, public baths, social settlements, in-

stitutional churches, are multiplying. **Health.** Slums and sweatshops are giving place to improved tenements, sanitary shops and model dwellings. The death rate is falling. **Reforms.** Vice is being suppressed and political corruption everywhere attacked. **Children** are placed in homes, not institutions. Child labor is less. **Temperance.** The consumption of spirits is on the decrease in Canada, Holland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

IMMORTALITY AND SELFISHNESS.

It has been said again and again that faith in immortality is essentially selfish. Even so distinguished a thinker as Mr. Frederick Harrison declared that to long for immortality is the very essence of selfishness.

If for us immortality means opportunity in the hereafter to continue the divine task of spiritual development, to go on hewing out of the rough marble of life's trials and temptations the perfect statue of character, to approach within, ever nearer distance, throughout eternity, of one's ideal, how can it be a selfish faith? Given that desire and instantly the faith in immortality becomes ennobled and serves as one of the greatest inspirations in the conduct of life. Surely of all human ambitions none can be grander or more unselfish than the wish to be forever such a being as shall promote the happiness and welfare of all who are capable of being helped.

If our souls are on fire with the desire for plentitude of being, for the culture that comes through service, for every influence or agency that shall make us worthier souls, then is there nothing selfish or sordid in our wish for immortality, but on the contrary that wish becomes the very noblest we can entertain and our faith in a future life takes rank among the mightiest of our inspirations.

The man of moral seriousness, the man who looks on life as a sacred privilege and trust, who has visions of the possible heights to which his nature can climb, who has touched depths of purifying experience prophetic of others deeper still, the man who is capable of holding high and sacred friendships, whose moral horizon embraces ambitions that are worthy and aims that are exalted and exalting, such a man will look on im-

mortality as a priceless boon, not because it offers the promise of future delights and rewards, but because it affords unparalleled opportunity for service, for enlarging his nature, rounding out his character, completing the dimensions of his being, coming closer to his ideal and maturing the great life-purpose which here on earth had time only to blossom or to bud.

'Tis the very essence of true nobility to wish to be a beneficent being for all eternity. When we hear a man say that he does not care for personal immortality we instantly suspect one of two things; either that he has not yet learned the ennobling lessons of life's adversities, losses and griefs, or else that his life is self-centered, that he has never passed an hour in consecrated service, never known what it is to spend himself or be spent for the sake of others. Far, therefore, from holding that desire for immortality is selfish, we maintain that every truly unselfish soul will crave it and that for a man to be satisfied with his own personal annihilation at death is a mark of low spiritual breeding.

"BELIEVING" AND "KNOWING" WE ARE IMMORTAL.

Belief is not equivalent to knowledge. Believe in a life hereafter we may because reason endorses it, but knowledge thereof we have none because that is the product of reason plus experience. No one, therefore, has any right to say "I know I am immortal," because as yet no one has had unquestioned experience of a future life. True, the Spiritualists claim they have communication with departed friends, but their claim is not yet established. It is still being examined. A "consensus of the competent" has not yet been reached. The question of personal conscious survival after death remains as before, an **open** question. Of the six steps through which every open question passes before being closed, this one has passed through but five. Not until universal verification—implying the settlement of all doubt and dispute on the subject, the agreement of all who can think upon it—has been reached can we be justified in saying we **know** we are immortal. Till then the utmost we are warranted in doing is to **believe** in immortality and for this reason gives us ample justification because immortality is nothing less than an ethical necessity. Either the soul loyal on earth to his ideal must have opportunity after death to con-

tinue his loyal pursuit, because justice requires it, or else in the infinite plan of the Eternal something equivalent to such opportunity must be provided. Personal immortality or something ultra personal as good; between these alternatives there can be no choice in a universe built on justice. Hence our conclusion that immortality is an **ethical** necessity.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD.

SEATTLE.

The Society for Universal Religion resumed its regular Sunday services September 17th. The change of place from down town to up town and of hour from evening to morning made very little difference in the attendance of members. Rabbi Wise spoke to a large audience on "The New Conscience." Spt. 24th Prof. Alden, of the State University, took for his subject "Religion in History," and on Oct. 1st Mr. Martin was again at his post after an absence of three months in Europe. Since his return the topics of his Sunday discourses have been closely related to his travel abroad, as the following list indicates. "M. Angelo's Statue of Moses, or Idealward Living." "The Temple at Paestum and the Cathedral at Vienna, or Greek and Christian Contributions to the Ideal of Life." "Raphael's 'Transfiguration' and the Transfiguration of Life." "Modern Italian Art as Interpreting the Ideal of Democracy." "Assisi and the Gospel of St. Francis."

The Junior Branch elected officers for the new season Oct. 8th, and on the following Wednesday the teachers met with Mr. Martin to discuss the new illustrated course of moral instruction begun Oct. 15th. The Woman's Union held a very successful meeting Oct. 11th. Elaborate plans are now maturing for the annual Christmas sale to be held next month, the proceeds of which will be devoted to defraying the music expenses of the Society. Mr. Martin has announced a series of illustrated lectures on successive Tuesday evenings in November. The subjects are, "Venice Revisited," "Masterpieces of Italian Art," "The Religious Horse Races of Siena" (Il Palio), and "Life and Art in Pompeii." The course will be repeated in Tacoma on successive Thursday evenings.

TACOMA.

After a year of faithful and loyal service to the congregation of the First Free Church of Tacoma, Rev. Norman H. Nesbitt has resigned his charge, and will enter into other fields of usefulness, where his versatility and talent will undoubtedly enable him to reap in larger measure the material needs of a rapidly growing family.

Both Mr. Nesbitt and his charming and talented wife will be greatly missed in Tacoma by a considerable circle of friends and admirers, whose well wishes will follow them into whatever field they may conclude to labor. It is Mr. Nesbitt's declared intention to engage in the work of practical psychology and healing. C.

LOS ANGELES.

During July and August Mr. B. Fay Mills was actively engaged at "Venice" on the seashore adjacent to Los Angeles, conducting the "Venice Assembly." This remarkable and unique assembly afforded intellectual and spiritual entertainment and recreation for many of The Los Angeles Fellowship. Services were held each Sunday during that period in the city under the leadership of Assistant Minister R. E. Blight. Commencing the first Sunday in September regular services were resumed in Blanchard Hall, which is filled each Sunday. The Children's Church, Sunday School and adult class meet in the same building. Mrs. Mills has again organized three classes in the study of Emerson, and the attendance shows the appreciation in which this gifted woman is held.

E. T. DUNNING.

DO ANY OF FOLLOWING BOOKS APPEAL TO YOU?

Science and the Future Life ..... *Jos. H. Hyslop*
The Wonders of Life ..... *Ernst Haeckel*
The Widow's Mite ..... *Dr. Funk*
Evolution and Its Relation to Religious Thought.. *LeConte*
The Power of Silence ..... *Horatio Dresser*
Paths to Power ..... *Floyd B. Wilson*
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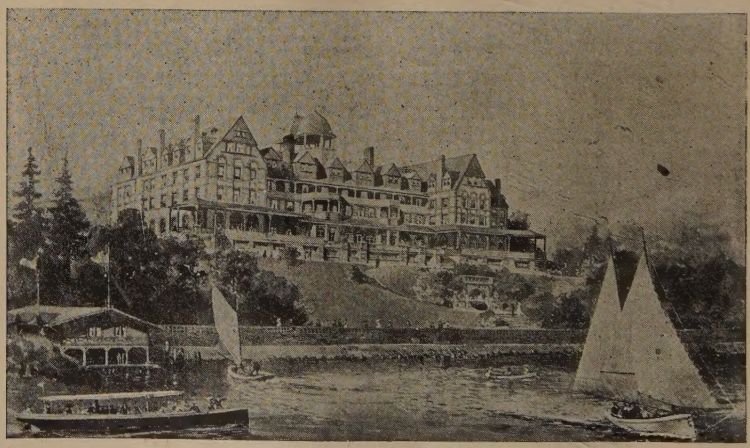

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